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SUBJECT: THE TALE OF "JUANITO" TELLS A LARGER STORY ABOUT PRD  
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CABLE HAS BEEN RETRANSMITTED UNDER MRN MEXICO 32

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1.(SBU) Summary: Raphael Acosta, otherwise known as "Juanito," is a charismatic political figure whose unique sojourn into Mexico City's internecine political world has proven emblematic of much of the Revolutionary Democratic Party's (PRD) dysfunctionality. Former 2006 PRD presidential candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) propelled Juanito into the national spotlight during the summer 2009 elections when he requested Juanito fill in behind Carla Brugada when the latter was disqualified by the electoral tribunal in her bid to head one of Mexico City's largest boroughs, Iztapalapa. However, after Juanito won the election, he proved unprepared to give up his position as he had prior agreed. The petty, often mean-spirited public dispute among opposing factions over this matter has only reinforced the PRD's inability to heal old wounds and put together a united front. End Summary.  
Juanito Wins the Election, Refuses to Withdraw  
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12. (SBU) Background: In the run-up to summer 2009 elections, the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) disqualified Clara Brugada, the PRD's candidate for the presidency of the borough of Ixtapalapa, Mexico City's most populous district, with a claim to the largest city budget. (Note: Mexico City has sixteen boroughs, led by elected "heads of boroughs." These officials report to the city's mayor, Marcel Ebrard. The City Council, or "Legislative Assembly" passes the budget and legislation. End note). The IFE declared Brugada's victory in the primaries invalid due to electoral irregularities.

13. (SBU) AMLO selected Juanito, a Labor Party (PT) leader and an indigenous follower who had supported AMLO in past elections, to replace Brugada in the election as a proxy candidate on the understanding he would give the seat up if elected, allowing Mexico City Mayor Marcelo Ebrard to name Brugada as Juanito replacement. However, once Juanito won, egged on by his supporters and his newfound fondness for the political stage, he refused to give up his seat as originally agreed.  
Ebrard Convinces Juanito to Step Down  
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14. (SBU) In the midst of great publicity, the simple, but charismatic Juanito - known for the trademark bandana in the colors of the Mexican flag he wears wrapped around his forehead and his tendency to refer to himself in the third person - announced his intention to assume the council seat representing the district of Iztapalapa. Following a meeting with Mexico City Mayor Ebrard, only days before his official swearing-in ceremony in September, Juanito apparently decided to turn over his position to Clara Brugada. In return for his concession, PRD contacts allege that Ebrard promised to provide Juanito monetary compensation and employment for him and his family in the city government. According to British Embassy analyst Monica Jimenez, the federal government affords all public servants the right to take short-term, temporary leave. Under this

regulation, Juanito "resigned," and Brugada began work as the head of borough immediately.

#### Juanito's Return

15. (SBU) Juanito, though, clearly was not prepared to leave the political scene quietly. Barely a month and a half after his resignation, he decided to reclaim his position. Wishing Juanito would just go away, twelve of city's fifteen heads of boroughs, all supporters of AMLO, signed a letter to the Mexico City Legislative Assembly requesting that it remove Juanito and reappoint Brugada. The Legislative Assembly formed a special commission to study this matter. However, the commission would have been unlikely to render a decision before March 2010, and it would have found determining a legal basis for ousting Juanito difficult.

#### Juanito Finally Pushed Off the Political Scene

16. (SBU) Cutting short this drawn-out process and determined to eliminate Juanito's claim to the Iztapalapa seat permanently, Clara Brugada accused Juanito at a December 8 press conference of having used falsified birth certificates to stand for political office and with lying, or at least exaggerating, about his family history. Brugada threatened to press charges unless he resigned. Before becoming front-page news, Juanito had lived a modest life. Born one of 20 children into a poor, indigenous family, Juanito may well have purchased the birth certificate. (Note: Many poor Mexican families fail to document births and later purchase a birth certificate as it is requisite to acquiring a national identification card and a host of other documents. Generally, the government considers this a minor crime and rarely prosecutes it. End note.) It is also possible Brugada used her contacts in city government to manufacture false documents in Juanito's name to undercut his legitimacy. An outdated Mexican federal law says that all public servants must present information regarding their family connections to the head of their political institutions before their inauguration into public office. Technically, Mexican law defines this as an administrative offense, with a maximum penalty of dismissal. Brugada clearly meant to cut Juanito out of the picture even if it meant exaggerating the letter of the law.

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17. Juanito again met with Ebrard, who allegedly advised Juanito of the legal problems he faced. Following this meeting, Juanito resigned permanently. Ebrard immediately asked the Mexico City Legislative Assembly to appoint Clara Brugada. The Assembly, though some members previously voiced objections to Brugada in addition to Juanito, installed her the following day by a vote of 46 to 16, with one abstention.

18. (SBU) Comment. In many ways, Juanito's story is emblematic of PRD dysfunctionality. AMLO defied his party's political structure and the city's overarching electoral framework to push forward his preferred candidate even after she had been disqualified. The fact that he commands the loyalty of thirteen of the city's sixteen boroughs certainly strengthened his hand. Given the relative importance of Iztapalapa, AMLO was determined to place his hand-picked supporter in the borough and not countenance the presence of a player as unpredictable and independent as Juanito. Ebrard assumed a key role in convincing Juanito to resign and

persuading the Legislative Assembly to appoint Brugada. Though he and AMLO represent the party's two most viable candidates for 2012 PRD presidential nomination, Ebrard appears determined to walk a fine line between maintaining an informal alliance with AMLO and gradually winning the support of AMLO's opponents within the PRD, the Nueva Izquierda faction, for the 2012 candidacy.

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